

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-09

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R 290500Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4922

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 0228

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, YE, SA

SUBJECT: CALL ON NEW PRIMIN

1. I MADE INITIAL COURTEST CALL ON NEW YARG PRIMIN ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI JANUARY 28. PRIMIN, WHO HAS HAD CLOSE AND FRIENDLY ASSOCIATION WITH EMBASSY AS CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR AND WHO IS US-EDUCATED, RECEIVED ME WARMLY AND EXPRESSED DESIRE FOR CLOSE ASSOCIATION, BOTH PERSONAL AND OFFICIAL. HE EMPHASIZED "HIGH VALUE" HE PLACED ON EXPERIENCE GAINED IN US AND HIS HOPE THAT AMERICAN SYSTEM COULD CONTRIBUTE TO YEMEN'S DEVELOPMENT. IN PARTICULAR HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT US PRIVATE SECTOR COULD CONTRIBUTE.

2. I RESPONDED THAT USG ATTITUDE TOWARDS YAR WAS CLEARLY POSITIVE. YEMENI PEOPLE ENERGETIC AND INTELLIGENT AND WERE MAKING GREAT EFFORTS TO HELP THEMSELVES. USG WISHED CONTRIBUTE. I WOULD WELCOME ANY IDEAS THAT PRIMIN, IN SPIRIT OF OPENESS, WOULD CARE TO SUGGEST. WE WOULD ALSO EXERT EVERY EFFORT TO MAKE AMERICAN BUSINESS AWARE OF AND INTERESTED IN YEMEN. COUNTRY SEEMED PARTICULARLY SUITED, BECAUSE OF CALIBER OF ITS PEOPLE, FOR DEVELOPMENT LABOR-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES ALONG LINES TAIWAN, ALTHOUGH THIS COULD REALISTICALLY

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TAKE A LONG TIME.

3. COMMENT: APPOINTMENT OF ABD AL-GHANI CABINET HAS RECEIVED ALMOST UNIVERSALLY POPULAR REACTION LOCALLY, EXCEPT FOR HARD-LINE CONSERVATIVES. THIS IS PARTLY BECAUSE OF ITS ACKNOWLEDGED COMPETENCE AND STRESS ON DEVELOPMENT, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT IS SEEN AS INDEPENDENT OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE, AS OPPOSED TO SAUDI-SPONSORED RIGHTISTS AND IRAQI-BACKED LEFTISTS. PRESIDENT HAMDI, IN WELL-PUBLICIZED STATEMENT FOLLOWING SWEARING-IN OF CABINET, DREW ON THIS LATENT YEMENI NATIONALIST PRIDE BY STRESSING THAT CABINET RESPONSIBLE SOLELY TO YEMENI PEOPLE. HAMDI ALSO ASSERTED THAT THIS FIRST CABINET CHOSEN ON MERITS RATHER THAN RESULT OF POLITICAL BARGAINING. NOTING THAT IN PAST "WE HERE TALKED A LOT BUT DID VERY LITTLE", HAMDI PROMISED THAT NEW CABINET WOULD ACHIEVE RESULTS. YEMENIS HAVE SEEN TOO MANY REVOLVING-DOOR CABINETS IN PAST YEARS TO EXPECT TOO MUCH, BUT THERE IS STRONG DESIRE THAT THIS CABINET BE GIVEN CHANCE TO PROVE ITSELF.

4. KEY FACTOR IN SITUATION REMAINS SAG ATTITUDE. IF SAG-SPONSORED CONSERVATIVES WORK TO OUST ABD AL-GHANI, RESULT COULD BE MARKED INCREASE IN POLITICAL INSTABILITY. SAUDIS WOULD BE WELL-ADVISED TO RECALL DISASTROUS EGYPTIAN EXPERIENCE HERE AND NOT TO PUSH FOR A GOVERNMENT TOTALLY SUBSERVIENT TO LOCAL CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS AND BY EXTENSION TO SAG. HAMDI IS OBVIOUSLY AND THUS FAR SUCCESSFULLY TRYING TO SET A MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD COURSE WHICH TAKES INTO ACCOUNT BOTH LOCAL AND REGIONAL REALITIES AND WITH WHICH WE AND THE SAUDIS CAN COOPERATE. FOR THE SAUDIS TO ASK FOR MORE NOW THAT THE "LEFTISTS" HAVE BEEN OUSTED WOULD ONLY LEAD TO POLARIZATION WHICH IN OUR OPINION IS NEITHER IN US OR SAUDI INTERESTS.
SCOTES

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